



Ballona Wetland Restoration Planning Process

In 2004, the State of California took title to 600-acres of the former Ballona Wetlands in Los Angeles. The property is owned by two state agencies, the Department of Fish and Game (DFG) and the State Lands Commission. The State Coastal Conservancy (Conservancy) has funding for planning and restoring the property. Together, the three agencies are working with stakeholders and other agencies to develop a plan for restoration of this extraordinary resource. The Conservancy provides funding for the planning effort and manages the work plan, budget, and schedule. Restoration Goals and Principles were developed through the public process as described below. As the landowner, DFG will be the applicant for any permits needed for the restoration project and the lead agencies for purposes of CEQA. A restoration plan will be developed for all of the lands owned by the state. Planning is being conducted within the landscape and watershed context, incorporating adjacent and ecologically related resources.

Project Goals

Ecosystem Restoration: Restore, enhance, and create estuarine habitat and processes in the Ballona Ecosystem to support a natural range of habitat and functions, especially as related to estuarine dependent plants and animals.

Habitat: Preserve, restore, enhance, and create a variety of functional wetland and estuarine habitats representative of the Ballona Ecosystem.

Biodiversity: Preserve and increase the native biodiversity of the Ballona Ecosystem. Identify and protect multiple levels of diversity (e.g. species, habitats, biogeographic provinces and trophic structure).

Physical/Chemical Processes: Maintain and establish physical and chemical processes consistent with the restoration goals.

Sustainability: Facilitate the conservation and restoration of natural resources in a manner that maintains and improves the ecological integrity, function, diversity and productivity for future generations.

Social and Socioeconomic Values: Create opportunities for aesthetic, cultural, recreation, research and educational use of the Ballona Ecosystem that are compatible with the environmentally sensitive resources of the area.

Public Access: Design enhanced access to and within the Ballona Ecosystem consistent with ecosystem preservation and restoration values in a safe, consistent, coherent and functional manner.

Cultural Access and Preservation: Initiate formal and informal consultation with representatives of the Gabrielino/Tongva Tribal Council to develop guidelines that contribute to the preservation of sacred and cultural sites.

Recreational Use: Design site to accommodate an appropriate level of fishing, boating, walking, and other activities consistent with the Ecological Reserve Designation and ecosystem restoration values.

Public Safety and Security: Design public access so that the wetlands are a safe place to visit.

Guiding Principles

The planning process will:

- Be based on the best available science, developed with technical and scientific expertise
- Be transparent and will allow all stakeholders input
- Respect the decision-making bodies of each of the State Agencies

Planning Process Organization

The Ballona Restoration Planning Working Group (Working Group) meets periodically in open public meetings to hear project updates, to provide input, and to support the restoration planning. The Working Group includes any interested organizations, agencies, and individuals who wish to be involved. Subcommittees of the Working Group may be formed to address specific issues. A subcommittee to address issues related to interim site management has been formed and has developed the interim site management and access plan which is currently being implemented. .

An Agency Advisory Committee advises the project management team. The Committee includes senior staff and wetland/habitat restoration experts from other agencies that have jurisdiction or interests related to this project. Agency Advisors include representatives from US Fish and Wildlife Service, National Marine Fisheries Service, the Coastal Commission, the Regional Water Quality Control Board, the City of Los Angeles, the County of Los Angeles, the Santa Monica Bay Restoration Commission, the Army Corps of Engineers and other agencies.

A Scientific Advisory Committee (SAC) has been created that includes wetland restoration scientists. The SAC meets regularly to review the science used in restoration plan and to guide implementation of an adaptive management and monitoring program. Members of the SAC were nominated by interested stakeholder organizations, public agency representatives and members of the public. Members of the SAC were selected by the Project Management Team to include a variety of relevant wetland restoration experience and expertise.

Scientific Advisory Committee Members

<i>Name</i>	<i>Affiliation</i>
Richard Ambrose, co-chair	UCLA
Eric Stein, co-chair	Southern California Coastal Water Research Project
John Callaway	San Francisco State University
John Dixon	Coastal Commission
John Dorsey	Loyola Marymount University
Phillipa Drennan	Loyola Marymount University
Wayne Ferren	Maser Consulting, UC Santa Barbara (retired)
Robert Gearheart	Humboldt State University (retired)
Michael Josselyn	Wetland Research Associates
John Largier	Bodega Marine Lab, UC Davis
Shelley Luce	Santa Monica Bay Restoration Commission
Ken Schwartz	Jones & Stokes
Camm Swift	Entrix, LA Museum Natural History (emeritus)
Joy Zedler	University of Wisconsin

Rather than create a redundant organization, the Ballona Scientific Advisory Committee is managed as a special project of the Southern California Wetland Recovery Project's Science Advisory Panel (SCWRP SAP). A number of members of the Ballona SAC already serve on the SCWRP SAP. In addition, the work that will be completed by the Ballona SAC will compliment and further efforts already underway by the SCWRP SAP to develop an integrated regional monitoring program for wetland restoration projects.

Scope, Budget and Schedule

Restoration planning is expected to take three and half years and cost up to two million dollars. The Coastal Conservancy Board approved initial restoration planning funds in December 2004 to pay for costs related to developing conceptual restoration alternatives and feasibility analysis. Upon selection of a preferred alternative, staff will request additional planning funds to complete all required environmental review, project permitting and final engineering and design.

For More Information, Contact:

Coastal Conservancy 1330 Broadway, Suite 1100 Oakland, CA 94612 (510) 286-1015

Jack Liebster, Project Manager: jl Liebster@scc.ca.gov

Mary Small, Southern California Regional Manager: msmall@scc.ca.gov

Website: <http://www.scc.ca.gov/Ballona/index.html>